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SUBJECT: OPPOSITION DEVELOPING A "GOVERNANCE PACT"

REF: CARACAS 2707

Classified By: Mark A. Wells, Acting Political Counselor,
for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) A "brain trust" of informal consultants is working with the Coordinadora Democratica (CD) to develop a post-Chavez governance plan to help convince Venezuelans to vote against President Hugo Chavez in the August 15 recall referendum. Fernando Martinez Mottola, a consultant for the CD, said the plan, which includes the key issues of employment, personal security, health, education, and social security will create a basic framework and a set of objectives for an opposition-led government. Opposition leaders told the Ambassador on June 16 that this governance plan will serve as the Coordinadora Democratica's (CD) substantive agenda for the referendum campaign. Martinez said plan would be ready by June 25, but it would not be a major component of the campaign until some technical issues (i.e. automation, observers) are resolved. Given the diverse composition of the opposition, it will be a challenge to develop a consensus agenda that resonates with voters. End summary.

Opposition Develops Its Message

2. (C) On June 16, Fernando Martinez Mottola, a businessman and member of the opposition "brain trust" that consults informally with the CD, met with PolOff to outline the strategy behind a "governance pact," which aims to provide a broad strategic plan for a post-Chavez, opposition-led government. The plan will include themes such as employment, personal security, health, education, and social security. In addition, the plan will address four central themes: reconciliation, decentralization, continuity of democracy, and social issues.

3. (C) The political diversity of the opposition will not permit a detailed document, said Martinez, but rather broad guiding principles aimed at alleviating Venezuela's social problems, improving economic policy, and re-establishing institutional integrity. Martinez said that the CD hopes to provide potential voters with a governance plan that incorporates ideas from previous opposition-affiliated plans. Various transition plans have already been offered by Gente de Petroleo, economist Gerver Torres, academics at Andres Bello Catholic University, and a special CD committee.

Timing is Everything

4. (C) Martinez said the CD would not present its governance plan until technical referendum issues, such as automation and international observers, are resolved. Martinez said the opposition must also attack Chavez effectively on social issues as part of its presentation. He predicted the CD would not be ready to release the governance plan until a few weeks before the referendum. (Separately, Martinez told the Ambassador June 16 the plan would be ready by June 25.)

Comment

5. (C) The opposition needs to maintain its unity above all and avoid fractious debates over transition plans. But developing a common substantive agenda is a necessary component of its overall recall referendum campaign. Finding a balance between satisfying its diverse composition and delivering a credible, meaningful message to the electorate remains the challenge for the opposition.

6. (C) At a June 16 luncheon hosted by the Ambassador,

opposition heavy weights Alberto Quiroz, Teodoro Petkoff and Pompeyo Marquez insisted that for the referendum, the heart of the opposition's message would be negative - Chavez has failed. Within that message special attention would be given to the theme of the Chavez government's corruption. This message in any event is one the whole opposition can agree upon.
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